

CAVALCADE  
OF COUNTIES:

# OUT OF THE SHADOW



Clustered near riverfront (left), near bridge, are three of Camden's industrial "Big Four"—RCA, Esterbrook and Campbell's. Tall building

overlooking domed Court House is the 22-story City Hall and Court House annex. Shed-like structure in lower left is Pennsylvania R. R. station.

VIVID colors vied with somber tones on the canvas of time as history painted Camden County's portrait. Certainly the background sketched in by the Quakers was quiet enough, yet highlights twinkled—in the romance of remarkable Elizabeth Haddon and in the Celtic enterprise of Mark Newbie's "Patrick's Pence."

Soon the painting became lurid as Philadelphians crossed the river to frolic and gamble in Jersey. However, just as highlights lightened earlier Quaker somberness, now the less volatile on the Jersey side insisted firmly that their towns would not be painted permanently red. Walt Whitman touched in pastel contrast after the Civil War, at the same time that industrial giants added body and vigor to the canvas.

Always, however, history painted against a shadow—cast from across the river by Philadelphia.

SO all-pervading was the Philadelphia influence, in fact, that Camden was known merely as "Cooper's Ferry" for its first century. Right from the time William Royden was granted a license in 1688 to run a "very needful and much wanted" ferry across to Philadelphia, the ferries seemed to run "to" Philadelphia rather than "between" towns.

William Cooper arrived in what is now Camden in 1681 and built a home

*(This is the fourth of a series of articles dealing with New Jersey's 21 counties, sketching their past and present with, now and then, a peek into their future. The counties will be considered alphabetically each week. Next Sunday: Cape May County.)*

on land he called "Pyne Poynt." Soon he bought the ferries from Royden and built up the cross-river trade, although few chose to settle on the Jersey side. Exceptions were the Irish Quakers, who ventured up Newton Creek in 1682 to found Collingswood, Woodlynne and South Camden.

One of these was enterprising Mark Newbie, who filled his sea chests with a quantity of farthings and half pence struck in Dublin 40 years earlier to commemorate a religious war. The coins, known as "Patrick's Pence" because of a likeness of St. Patrick on one side, were not legal tender in Ireland, but in America they were valuable. Soon after his arrival Newbie secured a bank charter from the Assembly and issued the coins, making the Dublin opportunist the country's first banker.

OTHERS settled Gloucester Point at the mouth of Big Timber Creek, close to the spot where a Dutch colony had mysteriously vanished in the 1620s. The disappearance of those 24 Dutchmen set ashore by Captain Cornelius Jacobsen Mey in 1623 rivals the story of Roanoke's Lost Colony. Mey built Fort Nassau for the colony before he left, yet when another Dutch ship

sailed to the spot in 1631 nothing remained.

Determination marked all early Quakers, but gracious, courageous Elizabeth Haddon was most determined of all. Elizabeth, only 18 years old, came alone to America in 1701 to develop the 500-acre plantation purchased in 1698 by her London Quaker father, John Haddon. She rode on horseback through the woods to the Haddon acreage on Cooper's Creek, where in a hut in a forest clearing the young Quaker miss settled down to live. Her zeal was not alone due to the pioneer spirit; her heart was in America, along with young Quaker Missionary John Estaugh, who had arrived a few months before.

Eventually John arrived in New Jersey from a Virginia preaching tour and Elizabeth met him. John showed great delay in coming to the point, so Elizabeth (in the words of Longfellow in "Tales of a Wayside Inn") finally whispered to the missionary on the way to Quaker meeting:

"I have received from the Lord a charge to love thee, John Estaugh!"

John spoke for himself soon after, of course, and they were married in her home in 1702. Three times the Estaughs traveled home to London, yet

always they returned to Haddonfield. John died on a preaching trip in the West Indies in 1742; Elizabeth lived on to the age of 80.

ROMANCE brought 21-year-old Betsy Griscom across the Delaware River, too. Betsy, demure in a Quaker bonnet, slipped over to Gloucester Point in 1773. In famous old Hugg's Tavern she stood side by side with John Ross, serious harness maker's apprentice, and heard a justice of the peace marry her "out of meeting"—and to the son of an Episcopal rector at that!

The marriage was kept secret for a year, but in 1774 the Quakers read the young wife out of the faith. Three years later Betsy Griscom Ross sewed 13 stars on America's first flag.

Just before the Revolutionary War Jacob Cooper had 40 acres laid out in a town plot he called Camden, in honor of the powerful English champion of constitutional liberty, Charles Pratt, first Earl of Camden. He visualized six streets north and south, intersected by Cooper and Market streets, but no one paid much attention. "Cooper's Ferries" remained the town name.

THE Revolution found Camden County (then still a part of Gloucester County) playing a legislative rather than an aggressive role. There were a few skirmishes, because Cooper's Ferries and Haddonfield were im-





Delaware River Bridge linking Camden (right) with Philadelphia. In lower left is the ferry slip at foot of Philadelphia's Market street from which point an artist of the early 1800's made view of Camden shown in engraving (below).

Staff photos by Corbitt.

## Eclipsed by Philadelphia for Years and Once Its Playspot, Camden County Eventually Emerged Into the Limelight With Own Personality; Betsy Ross and Dolly Madison Were Two of Figures From the Area Who Made History

BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM



portant outposts of Philadelphia. Mad Anthony Wayne, Count Pulaski and Lafayette strode the streets of Haddonfield with their troops. However, Haddonfield will be remembered as the meeting place in 1777 of the New Jersey Legislature, driven out of Trenton by the Hessians. Meeting in the Indian King Tavern (built in 1750), the Legislature established the powerful Council on Safety, approved bills involved in the design and preparation of the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey and enacted a bill substituting "state" for the word "colony" in certain public documents.

Cooper's Ferry also had distinguished visitors in 1777—the trustees of Princeton College, driven southward by the Hessians. The trustees convened on the Delaware banks to award degrees to the Class of '76.

PHILADELPHIA really discovered its Jersey neighbor after the war. Excellent ferry service lured hundreds across the river, among them winsome Dorothea (Dolly) Payne, who frequently visited at the Indian King in Haddonfield. A Quaker with charm, beauty and vivacity, Dolly married John Todd in 1791 and became a 21-year-old widow in 1793 when Philadelphia's yellow fever plague took her husband. The next year she met and married young James Madison and went on to renown in Washington as Dolly Madison.

Many Philadelphians headed for Gloucester Point, particularly the aristocratic Fox Hunting Club, which gathered there from 1766 to 1818 to chase foxes through Jersey meadows. Later the famed Fish House Club met on the Point and for years farmers from all over the state gathered at Gloucester Point for a tremendous picnic and day-long fishing expedition.

Cooper's Ferries and Gloucester Point suffered diminished importance when the Gloucester County seat was moved to Woodbury late in the 18th Century. Out in the eastern regions of the present Camden County several important stage stops grew up—in places like Blue Anchor, where the 1740 inn was a favorite stopping place; Winslow, with its noted "Sailor Boy" tavern; Mt. Ephraim, where Ephraim Albertson kept a top-notch place on the King's Highway; Chew's Landing, where travelers stopped in the 2½-story pre-Revolutionary War hotel and heard tales of John Chew, war hero; Blackwood, where Uriah Norcross centered his big stage coach business, and Stratford, where a white horse pictured on a swinging sign gave the pike to Absecon its name.

MOST noted, however, was Long-a-Coming, 15 miles from the Delaware and astride the pike from Camden to Mays Landing, and Somers Point. Good-natured disagreements arose concerning the name origin. Some at-

tributed it to sailors who struggled through the forests, hungry and thirsty until they found a spring near the spot. One drank deeply, then turned and exclaimed: "Wonderful, but sure long-a-coming!" More prosaically, others insisted the name described the slowness of the stagecoaches.

The spring story has good possibilities because Long-a-Coming (now Berlin) is near the ridge where four of South Jersey's most important streams arise. Water from springs on "The Divide" flows eastward to the Atlantic Ocean—in Mullica and Great Egg Harbor rivers—and westward to the Delaware, in Pennsauken and Big Timber creeks. All four streams are part of Camden County's borders.

Cooper's Creek took the first stride toward independence in 1828 when leaders cut themselves off from Newton Township and officially adopted the name "Camden" which Jacob Cooper had given his real estate dream in 1793. It wasn't much of a town—only 1,143 inhabitants—but its proximity to Philadelphia gave the promoters hope (even though one "segar-box" was enough to hold all the mail the new-born Camden received in a day).

ENGAGINGLY enough, the gayer Philadelphians were partially responsible for the incorporation of the town. First they flocked over to float-

ing bath houses near Windmill Is and, to the consternation of the modest aboard ferryboats. Then they frolicked in John Johnson's Vauxhall Gardens (where John's rum toddies were often too strong for weak heads) and Gottlieb Zimmerman's Columbia Gardens. All-night revelling made the sterner folk resolve to set up their own government—and their own Police Department.

STERNER laws didn't squelch the Philadelphia sporting set; it sent them elsewhere. The Philadelphia and Camden Race Course, built in 1835 on White Horse Pike near Haddon Heights welcomed them. Spring and Fall meets drew the best horses in the land—and some of the worst people. Betting on the horses cleaned out many a farmer in the neighborhood, and what the horses didn't take the confidence men did.

Drunkenness, gambling and debauchery hastened the track's demise. Despite the pleas of the promoters that they existed only to improve the breed, opposition persisted. Finally, after a great crowd gathered in 1845 to watch Fashion ("The Queen of the Turf") defeat Peytona in a heralded match, the track closed in 1847—much to the improvement of humans.

Agitation of a more important nature swept through the area at the same time, as leaders insisted that

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White Horse Hotel, former stage stop, gave pike to Absecon its name.

## CAMDEN COUNTY

(Continued from Preceding Page)

Camden County be cut away from Gloucester County. The coming of the Camden & Amboy Railroad to Camden in January, 1834, made the river town thrive. Many opposed a break from Gloucester County, but on March 13, 1844, Camden County was born. Long-a-Coming became the first county seat, but after prolonged political maneuvering county government moved permanently to Camden in 1848.

**C**AMDEN began to grow. Streets were sliced through cornfields for new homes; hundreds of wagons loaded with South Jersey produce, South Jersey bog iron and Philadelphia-bound shoppers rumbled through town headed for the bustling steam ferries. Camden's principal business continued to be ferrying, with big boats constantly shuttling back and forth, carrying produce to Philadelphia or bringing passengers back to the railroad terminals. There was even hope that Philadelphia families might see the advantages of living in rural Camden County, now that transportation was so good.

Suddenly, on the night of March 15, 1856, that hope died. More than 100 persons crowded aboard the ferry New Jersey that night before the boat eased out into the ice-clogged Delaware and headed slowly for Camden. In midstream fire broke out near the smokestack. Billowing smoke drove the pilot and engineer from the bridge, leaving the flaming ship to drift helplessly in the river. Ice hampered rescuers and the next morning Camden counted 48 dead on the New Jersey. Understandably, Philadelphians lost their enthusiasm for living in Camden.

Civil War time found the county

well established, however. Railroads cutting through the forests to Atlantic City encouraged glass manufacturers to start or expand business in Atco, Waterford and Clementon. Near Winslow, J. L. Mason made his famous fruit jar from 1856 to 1862. Real estate men laid out paper cities along the tracks in efforts to lure city people into the salubrious country, only to have the Civil War check their promotions.

A "railroad" of a different nature focused attention on Camden during the Civil War—the "Underground Railroad," the name given to the system used to help slaves escape across state to freedom. Camden was an important underground point and tradition says that escaping slaves sometimes hid in the cellar of Haddonfield's Indian King Tavern. A few of the freed slaves eventually found their way to Snow Hill (now Lawnside), a town set up by Abolitionists in 1840 for emancipated slaves, but most of the fugitives headed for New England or Canada as quickly as possible.

The middle 19th Century marked Camden's emergence as a manufacturing city of note. Richard Esterbrook came from England in 1858 to establish the Esterbrook steel pen factory, the first of its kind in the United States and forerunner to the business which today produces 200,000,000 steel pens annually. Nearby, Joseph Campbell and Abram A. Anderson started to pack fancy peas and tomatoes in 1869. Soon the name "Campbell" became nationally known. However, it remained for John T. Dorrance, who joined the company in 1897, to conceive the line of condensed soups for which Campbell's is today universally recognized.

Other businesses and industries



Haddonfield's Indian King Tavern, built in 1750, has colorful history.

came before 1880—lumber yards, tanneries, worsted mills, hat makers, iron works, machine works, chemical and dye plants, silver platers and porcelain teeth makers. Still, as Philadelphia prepared its centennial celebration in 1876 (from which Camden hoped to gain business), Camden newspapers carried complaints that cattle ran at large in the Second Ward, that the absence of street cars on Sundays ruined business and that street lights were doused on nights "when the moon was supposed to shine" (whether nature co-operated or not).

**A**CROSS Newton Creek in Gloucester town, the arrival of William J. (Billy) Thompson in 1869 revived the gay era. Gloucester had experienced an economic resurgence in 1844 when David S. Bowen, Philadelphia dry goods merchant, started textile manufacturing in the big four-story Washington Mills. Population jumped from 200 in 1840 to 5,347 in 1880. The town enjoyed that prosperity, but its views were split on "Billy" Thompson, shad fisherman, hotel owner and sporting man.

"Billy" made his start in shad fishing, then opened a hotel specializing in shad toasted on a white oak plank. Extensive advertising lured people from all over the world to eat Gloucester planked shad. Thompson tried to buy the ferryboats but the owners refused. Just to add insult to injury they stopped running boats after midnight.

Thompson retaliated by importing the steamboats Sylvan Dell and Sylvan Glen and running 24 hours a day. He built a race track in 1890 and became enmeshed in state-wide controversy which led to strong antiracing movements in the 1890s. Racing was outlawed in New Jersey and the downfall of the "Duke of Gloucester" was swift. First "Billy's" power vanished, then his wealth and he died in Ireland in absolute poverty.

**T**HE hustle and bustle of Camden after the Civil War suited Walt Whitman, the "Good Grey Poet" who came to live with a brother in Camden in 1873, soon after he suffered a paralytic stroke.

Whitman's Camden period was the happiest of his life. He lived to see a transformation of public opinion regarding his writings and his days were

productive and pleasant. He revised "Leaves of Grass" for five new editions between 1876 and 1892 and wrote "Specimen Days and Collect" in 1882-83. After he moved to 330 Mickie street in 1884 Whitman enjoyed the company of new-found friends. Facing death in 1892, he described himself as "a little spark of soul dragging a great lummock of a corpse-body to and fro." Friends buried him in a simple rough-cut vault in Harleigh Cemetery. The vault bore the inscription which Whitman wrote himself: "For that of me which is to die."

Whitman died at a time when Camden began to emerge as a great city, described by an 1890 writer as "crystallizing the life of Southern New Jersey and offering a thousand streams of influence and succor to its giant companion on the west side of the Delaware."

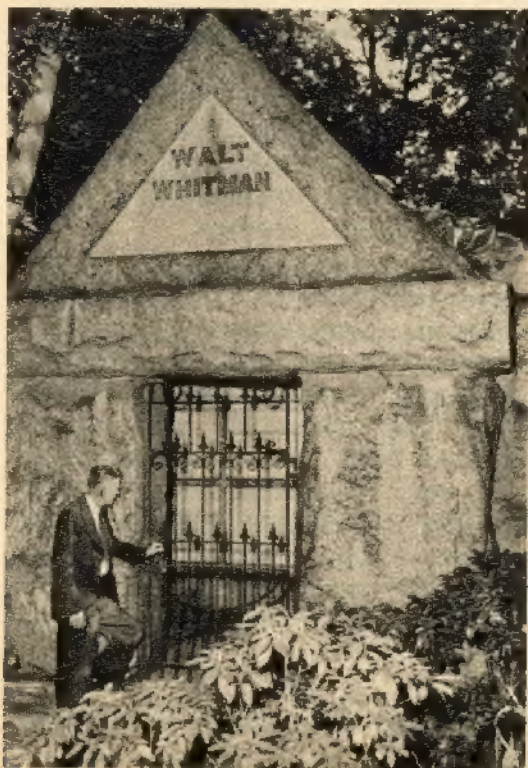
**C**HANCE brought Camden one of South Jersey's greatest boons in 1894 when a customer stepped into Eldridge R. Johnson's repair shop with one of the crude talking machines of the time. Johnson studied it and recognized its potentialities. He substituted a flat disc record for the cylinders perfected by Edison and began manufacturing machines. Johnson incorporated Victor Talking Machine Co. in 1901, the year the little fox terrier listening to "His Master's Voice" was born. Victor became the largest producer of phonograph records in the world long before Johnson sold out to a syndicate in January, 1927, for a reputed \$28,000,000 and 240,000 shares of RCA stock.

Camden's "big-four" was rounded out in 1899, when the New York Shipbuilding Co. started to build in Camden. Shipbuilding started November 27, 1900. Ships for both World Wars slid down the New York ways—including the Idaho and the Saratoga. The great transatlantic liners Manhattan and Washington were among peacetime vessels built in the plant.

Industrial growth naturally led to the emergence of a large local working class, one of whom was Peter J. McGuire, who fittingly enough started his earnest quest for an eight-hour day in the 1870s in the city which bore the stamp of Walt Whitman's democracy. In 1881 McGuire helped Samuel Gompers found the American Federation of Labor, and McGuire's insistence on a holiday for labor led Congress to establish Labor Day in 1894. "The



Home of the "Good Grey Poet" in Camden and tomb in Harleigh Cemetery which bears his inscription: "For that of me which is to die."







One of the county's spreading residential sections built to house workers of the Camden-Philadelphia area.

Father of Labor Day" is buried near Pennsauken.

**P**ROUD city fathers called Camden "The Biggest Little City in the World" in 1915 promotions. If only, they said wistfully, there was a bridge to Philadelphia...

Actually, Camden leaders had been saying that as far back as 1816, but not until July 5, 1926, did the dream come true. That day President Calvin Coolidge dedicated the 8,536-foot-long Delaware River Bridge linking the Delaware River cities. Four years in the making, the \$40,000,000 span was the longest suspension bridge in the world at dedication time.

The bridging of the Delaware might well have cast Camden even more sharply into Philadelphia's shadow, yet strangely the bridge seemed to set Camden free and in new-found equality rub the shadow from the portrait. That was partially because Philadelphia commuters began to come across the bridge to find home sites in Camden County. Industry attained new prosperity. County population increased sharply—to three times in 1940 what it was in 1900. Camden became New Jersey's fifth largest city, independent and alive to its responsibilities and potentialities.

Speeding Camden's growth and linking the county more closely to North Jersey is the New Jersey Turnpike, a lasting monument to Governor Alfred E. Driscoll, one of Camden's own. Born in Pittsburgh, Driscoll was educated in Haddonfield, served as a lawyer in Camden and started his political career in the county.

Outward from the river the highways each year bear hundreds of thousands of Philadelphia vacationists across state to Atlantic City and Cape May, a continuation of a 150-year-old tradition. The old stagecoach stops are mainly gone, yet the highways bear the old names—Black Horse and White Horse pikes. Much of Camden city's past is swallowed up in the industrial growth (although many narrow streets still show the town's ferry-town beginnings).

Heritage lives on, however, in places like Haddonfield, where some of the charm and simplicity of Elizabeth Haddon and the winsomeness of Dolly Madison can be felt in a visit to Indian King Tavern.

All in all, Camden has sat for an attractive portrait.

